

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

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|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| 1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)   |                             | 2. REPORT TYPE<br>Technical Papers |  | 3. DATES COVERED (From - To)                                  |  |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE   |                             |                                    |  | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER   |  |
|   |                             |                                    |  | 5b. GRANT NUMBER  |  |
|   |                             |                                    |  | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER                                    |  |
| 6. AUTHOR(S)  |                             | <i>Please see attached</i>         |  | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER<br><u>1011</u>                             |  |
|   |                             |                                    |  | 5e. TASK NUMBER<br><u>0046</u>                                |  |
|   |                             |                                    |  | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER<br><u>346204</u>                         |  |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  |                             |                                    |  | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT                             |  |
| Air Force Research Laboratory (AFMC)<br>AFRL/PRS<br>5 Pollux Drive<br>Edwards AFB CA 93524-7048 |                             |                                    |  |   |  |
| 9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)                                       |                             |                                    |  | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)                              |  |
| Air Force Research Laboratory (AFMC)<br>AFRL/PRS<br>5 Pollux Drive<br>Edwards AFB CA 93524-7048 |                             |                                    |  | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S NUMBER(S)<br><i>Please see attached</i> |  |
| 12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT   |                             |                                    |  |   |  |
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| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES   |                             |                                    |  |   |  |
| 14. ABSTRACT  |                             |                                    |  |   |  |
| <b>20030116 046</b>   |                             |                                    |  |   |  |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS   |                             |                                    |  |   |  |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:   |                             |                                    | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT<br><i>A</i> | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES   | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON<br>Leilani Richardson          |
| a. REPORT<br>Unclassified   | b. ABSTRACT<br>Unclassified | c. THIS PAGE<br>Unclassified       |  |   | 19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER<br>(include area code)<br>(661) 275-5015 |

MEMORANDUM FOR PR (In-House Publication)

FROM: PROI (TI) (STINFO)

02 May 2000

SUBJECT: Authorization for Release of Technical Information, Control Number: **AFRL-PR-ED-AB-2000-098**  
Jessica Harper, "Progress in Advanced Propellant Research" (Abstract)

**11<sup>th</sup> Advanced Space Propulsion Research Workshop** **(Statement A)**  
**(Pasadena, CA, 31 May - 02 Jun 2000)** **(Submission Deadline: 06 May 2000)**

1. This request has been reviewed by the Foreign Disclosure Office for: a.) appropriateness of distribution statement, b.) military/national critical technology, c.) export controls or distribution restrictions, d.) appropriateness for release to a foreign nation, and e.) technical sensitivity and/or economic sensitivity.

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PHILIP A. KESSEL Date  
Technical Advisor  
Propulsion Science and Advanced Concepts Division

## **Progress in Advanced Propellant Research**

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While alternative propulsion systems advance towards maturity, a reliance on traditional chemical propulsion remains. This continued use of chemical propulsion allows space-related industry and agencies to draw on existing assets, infrastructure, and experience with the established technologies in this area. Chemical propulsion can therefore be a less costly, more readily accessible propulsion option. Because of these advantages, research to push chemical propulsion systems to their theoretical limits is ongoing in parallel with development of other propulsion options. The mission of the Propulsion Directorate of the Air Force Research Laboratory is discovery and development of revolutionary and evolutionary improvements in several areas of chemical propulsion. This talk will cover new results in four propellant research programs. The ongoing AFOSR sponsored cryogenic solid High Energy Density Matter (HEDM) program has made progress towards the goal of trapping energetic species in solid hydrogen to create propellant with performance exceeding that of LOX/LH<sub>2</sub>. Achievements include production of solid hydrogen in centimeter thick samples and generation of HEDM species for isolation in solid hydrogen. A DARPA funded program, which also receives AFOSR support, made a breakthrough with synthesis of the N<sub>5</sub><sup>+</sup> cation, the first all nitrogen species to be discovered in over 100 years. This cation could be the first step to a very high performance monopropellant composed entirely of nitrogen. Significant successes have also been recently made in a monopropellant development program targeted to replace hydrazine with much lower toxicity and higher performance propellants. Monopropellant formulations from this effort have predicted performance exceeding that of some bipropellant systems. Testing and characterization is underway. Finally, a collaboration with NASA/MSFC to synthesize and test high performance liquid hydrocarbon fuels has yielded several viable new candidates with both density and specific impulse higher than RP-1, the standard liquid fuel. These advanced chemical propellants will increase payload on existing vehicles and enable new designs for future vehicles.